

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1-6. (Cancelled)

7. (Withdrawn) A method of producing an antimicrobial elastomeric article comprising:

forming an elastomeric article, applying at least one antimicrobial agent to the surface of the elastomeric article, and packaging the elastomeric article in a means for reducing the relative humidity in the vicinity of the elastomeric article to less than the ambient relative humidity.

8. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein the elastomeric article is a glove.

9. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, wherein the at least one antimicrobial agent comprises at least one water-soluble chlorhexidine salt and at least one water-soluble quaternary ammonium halide.

10. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 9, wherein the water-soluble chlorhexidine salt is chlorhexidine gluconate.

11. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 9, wherein the water-soluble quaternary ammonium halide is benzalkonium chloride and/or cetyl pyridinium chloride.

12. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein the antimicrobial agent is applied to the surface of the glove by spraying or dipping.

13. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, comprising packaging the glove with a means for reducing the relative humidity in the vicinity of the glove to less than about 30% relative humidity.

14. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 13, wherein the means for reducing the relative humidity in the vicinity of the glove to less than about 30% is a moisture-resistant barrier or metal foil pouch with a desiccant.

15. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 12, wherein the antimicrobial agent is applied to both the outside surface and the inside surface of the glove.

16. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 12, wherein the antimicrobial agent is applied to the outside surface of the glove.

17. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 12, wherein the antimicrobial agent is applied to the inside surface of the glove.

18. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, wherein the antimicrobial activity of the glove after storage for 45 days exhibits at least 1 log₁₀ reduction of the initial number of

microorganisms that come into contact with the treated glove surface in one minute of contact.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, wherein the gloves are essentially free of powder.

20. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, wherein the gloves are essentially free of starch.

21. (Withdrawn) A method of preserving and/or prolonging the antimicrobial efficacy of an elastomeric article, said method comprising:

obtaining an elastomeric article;

applying at least one antimicrobial agent to a surface of the elastomeric article;

and

packaging the elastomeric article with a means for reducing the relative humidity in the vicinity of the elastomeric article within the package to less than the ambient relative humidity,

wherein by antimicrobial efficacy is meant at least 1 log₁₀ reduction in the initial number of microorganisms in a sample that come into contact with the treated elastomeric article surface due to one minute of contact with said elastomeric article.

22. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 21, wherein the elastomeric article is a glove.

23. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 22, wherein the at least one antimicrobial agent comprises at least one chlorhexidine salt and at least one quaternary ammonium halide.

24. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 22, wherein the glove is essentially free of starch and/or powder.

25. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 22, comprising packaging the glove with a means for reducing the relative humidity in the vicinity of the glove to less than about 30% relative humidity.

26. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 22, wherein the microorganisms comprise *Staphylococcus aureus* and/or *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

27. (Currently Amended) A packaged antimicrobial elastomeric article comprising:

an elastomeric article that is essentially free of powder ~~and/or~~ and starch, and is coated on an outside surface with at least one antimicrobial agent; and

a package enclosing said elastomeric article and comprising a desiccant for reducing the relative humidity in the vicinity of the elastomeric article to less than the ambient relative humidity;

wherein the antimicrobial activity of the elastomeric article is extended compared to an unpackaged elastomeric article, and

wherein the packaged elastomeric article is capable of causing at least 1 log₁₀ reduction the initial number of microorganisms that come into contact with the treated glove surface in one minute of contact after being stored and/or transported for ~~a period of time without significant loss of antimicrobial activity~~ at least 45 days.

28. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 27, wherein the elastomeric article is a glove.

29. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 28, wherein the at least one antimicrobial agent comprises at least one chlorhexidine salt and at least one quaternary ammonium halide.

30-32. (Cancelled)

33. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 28, wherein the package enclosing the glove comprises a moisture-resistant barrier container or metal foil pouch.

34. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 28, wherein at least one chlorhexidine salt is chlorhexidine gluconate and at least one quaternary ammonium halide is benzalkonium chloride and/or cetyl pyridinium chloride.

35-42. (Cancelled)

43. (Currently Amended) A packaged antimicrobial elastomeric article comprising:

an elastomeric article that is essentially free of powder ~~and/or~~ and starch, and is coated on an outside surface with a water-soluble antimicrobial agent; and

a package system comprising a moisture-resistant barrier and a desiccant, said package system enclosing the elastomeric article;

wherein the antimicrobial activity of the elastomeric article is extended compared to an unpackaged elastomeric article; and

wherein the moisture-resistant barrier and desiccant of the package system reduce relative humidity and maintain the reduced relative humidity in the vicinity of the elastomeric article.

44. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 43, wherein the elastomeric article is a glove.

45. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 43, wherein the water-soluble antimicrobial agent is selected from the group consisting of a chlorhexidine salt, a quaternary ammonium halide, and combinations thereof.

46. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 44, wherein the antimicrobial activity of the glove after storage for 45 days exhibits at least 1 log₁₀ reduction of the initial number of microorganisms that come into contact with the treated glove surface in one minute of contact.

47. (Cancelled)

48. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 44, wherein the moisture-resistant barrier is selected from the group consisting of a barrier film, metallized film, and a foil laminate.

49. (Previously Presented) The packaged elastomeric article of claim 45, wherein at least one chlorhexidine salt is chlorhexidine gluconate and at least one quaternary ammonium halide is benzalkonium chloride and/or cetyl pyridinium chloride.